

# Daunorubicin

**Names** Cerubidine<sup>®</sup>, DaunoXome<sup>®</sup> (There may be other names for this medication.)

**Why am I Receiving Daunorubicin and How is it Given?** Daunorubicin is used to treat acute lymphocytic leukemia (AML), acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), and acute promyelocytic leukemia (APL). It is given by infusion into a vein (intravenous/IV).

**How Does it Work?** Cancer is a group of diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control. Both normal and cancer cells go through cycles that include a resting phase, active growing phases, and division (reproduction). Your chemotherapy schedule is based upon the type of cancer you have, the rate at which they divide, and the times when each drug is the most likely to be effective. This is why chemotherapy is typically given in cycles.

Daunorubicin is an anthracycline antitumor antibiotic. It acts in multiple phases of the cell cycle and slows or stops the growth of cancer cells in your body.

Traditional chemotherapy agents identify and attack cancer cells because they reproduce quickly. Unfortunately, normal cells that reproduce quickly, such as hair follicles, blood cells, and the cells lining the digestive tract (mouth, stomach, intestines), are also affected. During treatment, this may cause side effects. These normal cells will eventually grow back and be healthy.

**What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?**

Tell your doctor if you:

- have had an allergic reaction to daunorubicin
- have or have ever had heart, kidney or liver disease; radiation to the chest; infections; or any other medical conditions
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

**This drug may interact with other medications or cause harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal, or diet supplements that you are taking.**

### What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Low blood counts: Low levels of white blood cells, red blood cells, and/or platelets can increase your risk for infection, anemia/fatigue, and/or bleeding
- Pain at the IV site
- Nausea and vomiting within 1-2 hours of treatment (usually mild)
- Loss of appetite and/or stomach pain
- Mouth and/or throat soreness (for about a week after treatment)
- Hair loss (will grow back after treatment)
- Pink/orange/red urine for 1-2 days after your treatment
- Diarrhea
- Infertility
- Darkening of skin previously exposed to radiation therapy (called radiation recall)
- Darkening of the nail beds

### How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- Drink 2-3 quarts of fluid, especially water, every day unless your doctor limits your fluids.
- To help prevent infections, particularly if your white blood cell count is low, stay away from crowds or people with colds, flu, or other infections. Wash your hands often, and talk to your doctor before you have any vaccinations (immunizations), such as a flu shot.
- Be careful when handling sharp objects, stay away from rough sports or other situations where you could be bruised, cut, or injured, and use an electric razor.
- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen nausea and vomiting.
- Mouth care is very important while taking this drug. Rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ tsp of baking soda in 8 oz of water after every meal and at bedtime. Brush your teeth and gums often with a soft toothbrush. Avoid tobacco products, alcohol, and mouthwashes that contain alcohol.
- You may want to wear protective clothing for 1-2 days after therapy to prevent your clothes from being stained by your pink/red urine.
- Wear a hat, protective clothing, and sunblock with SPF of 30 or higher if you will be in the sun. If you have a rash, talk to your doctor before using any creams or lotions on it.

When Should I  
Call the  
Doctor?

## When should I call the doctor?

**Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if you have:**

- signs of severe allergic reaction: Swelling or tingling in your face, tongue, mouth, or throat; chest tightness; wheezing; trouble breathing or swallowing; dizziness, shortness of breath; heart palpitations; or hives

Please let us know if you go to the ER or are admitted to the hospital.

**Call your doctor immediately if you have:**

- pain, redness, blistering, or swelling where the IV was inserted
- any sign of infection: fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, or pain or burning upon urination

**Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have:**

- nausea, vomiting, or mouth sores that are not relieved by prescribed medication or that prevents you from eating or drinking
- more than 4-5 episodes of diarrhea or vomiting in 1 day
- unusual bleeding or bruising
- yellowing of eyes or skin

What Else  
Should I Know  
About  
Daunorubicin?

- Daunorubicin may cause serious heart problems at any time during treatment or months to years after treatment has ended. Your doctor will order tests, such as an electrocardiogram/EKG/ECG and echocardiogram (ultrasound), before and during your treatment to monitor your heart. **Call your doctor immediately if you have shortness of breath; difficulty breathing; swelling of the hands, feet, ankles, or lower legs; or fast, irregular, or pounding heartbeat.**
- This drug may cause menstrual irregularities in women and interfere with sperm production in men, causing sterility. Do NOT, however assume you cannot get pregnant or father a child while on this medication. Use an effective method of birth control. Daunorubicin may be harmful to the fetus.
- Do not use aspirin or any product that has aspirin in it (such as some cold medicines) unless you have talked to your doctor first.
- Keep all of your appointments with your doctor and lab.
- If you would like more information about daunorubicin, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.